

VZCZCXYZ0000
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMN #0142/01 0701307
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
R 111307Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8871
INFO RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUCNFB/FBI WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

S E C R E T MONTEVIDEO 000142

NOFORN
SIPDIS

DS/IP/ITA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2019

TAGS: ASEC PTER UY

SUBJECT: SECURITY ENVIRONMENT PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRE (SEPO) -
SPRING 2009

REF: 07558

Classified By: ASCHANDLBAUER, DCM, REASONS 1.4 (C)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Spring 2009 Security Environment Profile Questionnaire (SEPO) reflects continued lack of police resources and concern over a very porous border. In general, anti-US protests have declined in size and intensity since March 2007.

END SUMMARY

Post provides the following numbered responses to the questions posed in Reftel.

Political Violence

¶1. (SBU) Demonstrations

1-A. Are there any ethnic or religious communities in country capable of carrying out significant anti-American demonstrations?

A: (S/NF) No, there are no ethnic or religious communities capable of carrying out significant anti-American demonstrations. There are Union and Political groups that have conducted significant anti-American protests but they do not represent a single ethnic or religious community.

(S/NF) An ethnic/religious group with the potential for anti-American sentiments are the Muslim communities Located along the Uruguayan/Brazilian border, such as Hizballah. Some of these individuals have links to groups in the tri-border region of Argentina/Brazil/Paraguay. However, the diminutive Uruguayan Muslim community maintains a low profile and would be unlikely to conduct public protests in Montevideo against the U.S. They have however conducted protest marches in the border town of Chuy.

1-B. Have there been anti-American Demonstrations in the country within the last 12 months?

A: (SBU) Yes, several. Most recently there have been protests against the Iraq war, against the Israeli incursion into Gaza, in which the U.S. is denounced for being an ally/supporter of Israel, and in support of Bolivia.

1-C. Have demonstrations taken place near or in front of U.S. diplomatic facilities?

A: Yes.

1-D. What is the average size of an anti-American demonstration?

A: (SBU) Average size 100. Announcements for planned protests always advertise far more participants than the number that actually shows up. Protests range from 50 to 200 with a high of 5,000. The 5,000 person protest took place in March of 2007 in opposition to the POTUS visit to Uruguay.

1-E. Are anti-American demonstrations usually triggered by U.S. foreign policy initiatives, military actions, or by domestic issues?

A: (SBU) The main anti-American demonstrations were triggered by political events in other parts of the world. There were several protests in the city against the Israeli incursion into Gaza, but the U.S. Embassy was not a target. However, protesters denounce the U.S. as being an ally/supporter of Israel. Leaflets recovered at the scene of one Protest against Israel showed the American Flag next to the Israeli Flag. At another anti-Israel protest, protesters where heard chanting the phrase "Yankee go home".

1-F. Are demonstrations generally violent or peaceful?

A: (SBU) Generally peaceful with graffiti, minor property damage, burning posters or effigies and/or throwing bottles, paint bombs, or fireworks. A small splinter protest of about 20-30 individuals vandalized the Greek Embassy during a protest against the Israeli Embassy.

1-G. If Violent, have any demonstrations resulted in damage to USG property or injuries to USG employees?

A: (SBU) No injuries and no damage to USG property yet. Local police are able and willing to man barricades to augment perimeter security, and have prevented protesters from accessing the Chancery perimeter in the past.

1-H. If Violent, have any demonstrators ever penetrated our perimeter security line?

A: (C) No demonstrators have ever penetrated our perimeter security line. Improvements have been made to the chancery perimeter, and local police can augment perimeter security when needed, but protesters can get close enough to harass the compound with paint bombs and similar nuisances. It is nearly impossible to close off all the streets surrounding the Chancery.

1-I. Have there been anti-government demonstrations in the country within the last 12 months?

A: (SBU) Yes, there have been numerous protests against both the city and the national government have taken place. Many are triggered by or are in support of numerous labor strikes.

1-J. have demonstrations taken place near or in front of U.S. diplomatic facilities?

A: (SBU) Yes, protests often take place about a mile from the Chancery, near City Hall, and on one of the main avenues. An Obelisk, soccer stadium, and city park across the street from the COMRES are often used as rally points for crowds of thousands. Anti-American protests that take place in these areas can easily turn into a march on the Chancery.

1-K. What is the average size of an anti-government demonstration?

A: (SBU) Between 50-500.

1-L. Are demonstrations generally violent or peaceful?

A: (SBU) Generally peaceful with graffiti, minor property damage, some throwing of paint bombs and fireworks. During some protests masked demonstrators engaged in property

crimes, smashing windows, throwing bottles, throwing large fireworks, attempting to provoke the police, burning tires in the street, etc.

1-M. If violent, have any demonstrations resulted in damage to USG property?

A: (SBU) No damage to property yet.

12. (SBU) Macro Conflict Conditions

2-A. Is the Host Country engaged in an interstate or intrastate conflict? (This may include battles between organized and violent drug cartels.)

A: (SBU) No. However, Uruguay and neighboring Argentina have a serious dispute over the construction of a wood processing plant on the shared Uruguay River. Argentine protest groups continue to block bridges and trucks for many weeks at a time. While this is unlikely to evolve into intrastate conflict the situation is problematic.

2-B. If an intrastate conflict, is it an insurgency limited to a specific region or is it a countrywide civil war?

A: (SBU) N/A

2-C. If limited to a specific region, are any U.S. diplomatic facilities located in this region?

A: (SBU) N/A

2-D. Have any of the factions involved in intrastate conflicts signaled or demonstrated an anti-American orientation?

A: (SBU) N/A

13. (SBU) Host Country Capabilities

3-A. Are law enforcement agencies professional and well trained?

A: (S/NF) The Uruguayan National Police are relatively well trained. However, the RSO classifies them as minimally effective because of severe resource constraints. The police do not have a sufficient number of patrol vehicles to conduct patrols and/or pursue criminals. Most police officers moonlight from 40-60 hours a week to supplement their marginal salaries of \$150-\$200 USD per month. The police have minimal funds for maintenance of existing vehicles, equipment or facilities, and due to endless moonlighting the police are often exhausted.

(C/NF) In their attempts to combat rising crime the police are spread so thin they are becoming less and less dependable in manning previously agreed upon police posts protecting our USG facilities.

(C/NF) Current law heavily favors criminals, making prosecution difficult, and often resulting in same-day release with no charges pressed.

3-B. Have they been trained by U.S. agencies? If so, please elaborate on effectiveness of training.

A: (C/NF) Uruguayan Customs, Immigration, and selected police units (Intelligence, Narcotics) have received training from U.S. agencies, however the training has been limited to relatively small groups. We received a small amount of funding (\$50,000) in 2008 for counter-narcotics.

3-C. Are law enforcement agencies confronted with serious, widespread corruption inside their agencies?

A: (C/NF) There is some petty corruption at the street level, but the level of known corruption in Uruguay is relatively low when compared with the rest of South America.

3-D. Are the intelligence services professional and capable of deterring terrorist actions?

A: (C/NF) the Uruguayan Intelligence agencies (Military and Police) are professional and are cooperating with the USG to deter terrorist threats. The police intelligence service is relatively effective and works closely with us and neighboring Intel services on Intel sharing.

3-E. Have the intelligence services been cooperative with U.S. Embassy requests for information and support?

A: (C/NF) Yes in general.

3-F. Assuming there have been significant terrorist threats in recent years, have host country security services been able to score any major anti-terrorism successes?

A: (SBU) There have been no significant threats.

3-G. Has host country been responsive (re: timeliness and allocation of resources) to Embassy requests for protective security?

A: (SBU) Yes.

3-H. How does the Embassy assess the overall security at major airports in the country? (excellent, very good, good/average, or poor)

A: (C/NF) Good/Average in Montevideo, poor at small airports in the interior. Since 09/11/01 the Uruguayan government has enlisted the support of Uruguayan Air Force security personnel to screen passengers. They are moderately effective in screening passengers. U.S. carriers also have their own baggage screening programs. However, U.S. carriers have reported deficiencies in screening airport vendors, screening airport personnel and controlling ramp access. Small airports in the interior have minimal to zero security.

3-I. How effective are customs and immigration control agencies? (effective, average, or ineffective)

A: (SBU) Average at the airport and seaport in Montevideo. Ineffective or non-existent outside of Montevideo. Most of the 985 KM land border between Uruguay and Brazil is completely open. The new director of Customs has made some progress, but has a lot of work ahead of him.

3-J. How effective are border patrol forces? (effective, average, or ineffective)

A: (SBU) Ineffective. The Uruguayan government controls only major land and sea border crossings. Most of the 985 KM long land border with Brazil is wide open with only sporadic attempts at control and easily avoided fixed checkpoints.

Indigenous Terrorism

4. (SBU) Anti-American Terrorist Groups

4-A. Are there indigenous, anti-American terrorist groups in country?

A: (SBU) No. the only former domestic terrorist group, the Tupamaros, are now affiliated with the ruling political party the "Frente Amplio" or Broad Front.

4-B. If yes, how many? Please name groups.

A: (SBU) N/A

4-C. Have groups carried out anti-American attacks within the last 12 months?

A: (SBU) No.

4-D. Were any of these lethal attacks?

A: (SBU) N/A

4-E. Have groups attacked U.S. diplomatic targets?

A: (SBU) N/A

4-F. Have groups attacked U.S. business, U.S. Military, or U.S. related targets?

A: (SBU) Not since the 1970's when they kidnapped and killed an American Citizen U.S. Embassy employee.

4-G. Have groups limited their attacks to specific regions or do they operate countrywide?

A: (SBU) N/A

4-H. If attacks are limited to regions, are there any U.S. diplomatic facilities located in these regions?

A: (SBU) N/A

5. (SBU) Other Indigenous Terrorist Groups

5-A. Are there other indigenous terrorist groups (not anti-American) in country?

A: (SBU) No.

5-B. If yes, how many? Please name groups.

A: (SBU) N/A

5-C. Have groups carried out attacks in the capital or in areas where U.S. diplomatic facilities are located?

A: (SBU) N/A

5-D. Were attacks lethal and/or indiscriminate?

A: (SBU) N/A

5-E. Have any Americans been killed or injured in these attacks?

A: (SBU) N/A

Transnational Terrorism

6. (SBU) Transnational Terrorist Indicators

6-A. Are there any foreign terrorist groups that have a presence in country? Provide names.

A: (S/NF) Hamas and Hizballah do not have a presence in Uruguay but they do have a permanent presence on the Brazilian side of the Uruguay/Brazilian border and in the tri-border region of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. Some ETA members and many sympathizers reside in Uruguay.

6-B. How does post assess this presence? Is it an operational cell? Financial cell? Support cell? Propaganda cell?

A: (S/NF) Post is not aware of functioning operational terrorist cells in Uruguay. However Hamas and Hizballah conduct fundraising and financial operations on the Brazilian side of the Brazil/Uruguay borders. There is anecdotal evidence of possible money-laundering activities in Uruguay and banking secrecy laws would tend to support this activity.

6-C. Is the host government sympathetic to these groups?

A: (C/NF) Post is not aware of the government's views toward foreign terrorist groups. However the Uruguayan government is partially sympathetic to the governments of Cuba, Iran, Russia, and Venezuela, and increasingly more with China.

6-D. Are there suspect non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the country that have a relationship with any of these groups?

A: (SBU) No.

6-E. Are there any ethnic or religious communities in country that are sympathetic to these groups?

A: (S/NF) Yes, there is a small Muslim community located along the 985 KM Uruguayan /Brazilian border, in the Uruguayan departments of Rivera and Rocha. Some estimates put as many as 9 million persons of Middle Eastern extraction living in Southern Brazil. Some may have links to other groups in the tri-border region of Argentina/Brazil/Paraguay.

6-F. How does post assess the level, intent, and scope of hostile intelligence services (Iran, Cuba, Russia, China, Syria, Venezuela, Sudan, et. al.) in country relative to potential anti-American terrorist acts?

A: (S/NF) Venezuela, Cuba, Russia, China and Iran all have a relatively large embassy presence in Uruguay. Some of the officers in these embassies are known hostile intelligence officers. The Russian Embassy has an inordinate amount of known hostile intelligence officers. The EAC is aware of the presence of the Iranian Embassy as a potential operations platform for Hezbollah activities in the region. The EAC believes that Cuban and Venezuelan intelligence operatives may become more active in the future. China is making political inroads in Uruguay through donations of technical equipment and selling military equipment to the host government. The EAC has no knowledge of planning for terrorist acts.

6-G. How does post assess the availability of weapons and explosives in country or from nearby countries for hostile terrorist elements?

A: (C/NF) Weapons and explosives are readily available due to the porous land borders with Argentina and Brazil. Both Argentina and Brazil manufacture weapons and explosives. Montevideo has a sizable seaport which serves neighboring countries. Small shipments of weapons have been discovered mixed in with legitimate cargo and in vehicles that were randomly stopped crossing the border. The potential for weapons or explosives trans-shipment through Uruguay to/from Paraguay is high. Furthermore Uruguay is a largely agricultural country that utilizes both fertilizers and explosives for farming and mining. These readily available elements have the potential to be used to construct an IED.

(C/NF) Since Paraguay is landlocked almost all container traffic comes through the port of Montevideo, Uruguay. If illegal arms shipments, drugs, counterfeit merchandise are going to or from Paraguay via container, odds are that they transited the ports of Colonia and/or Montevideo.

¶7. (U) Point of Contact is RSO William A. Maxwell at Commercial Tel (011)5982-418-7777 ext. 2319, IVG 818-223-0000, STU x 2190.
Matthewman